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Ignite Your Career

The New Grads Bible

Soulaima Gourani

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The New Grad's Bible

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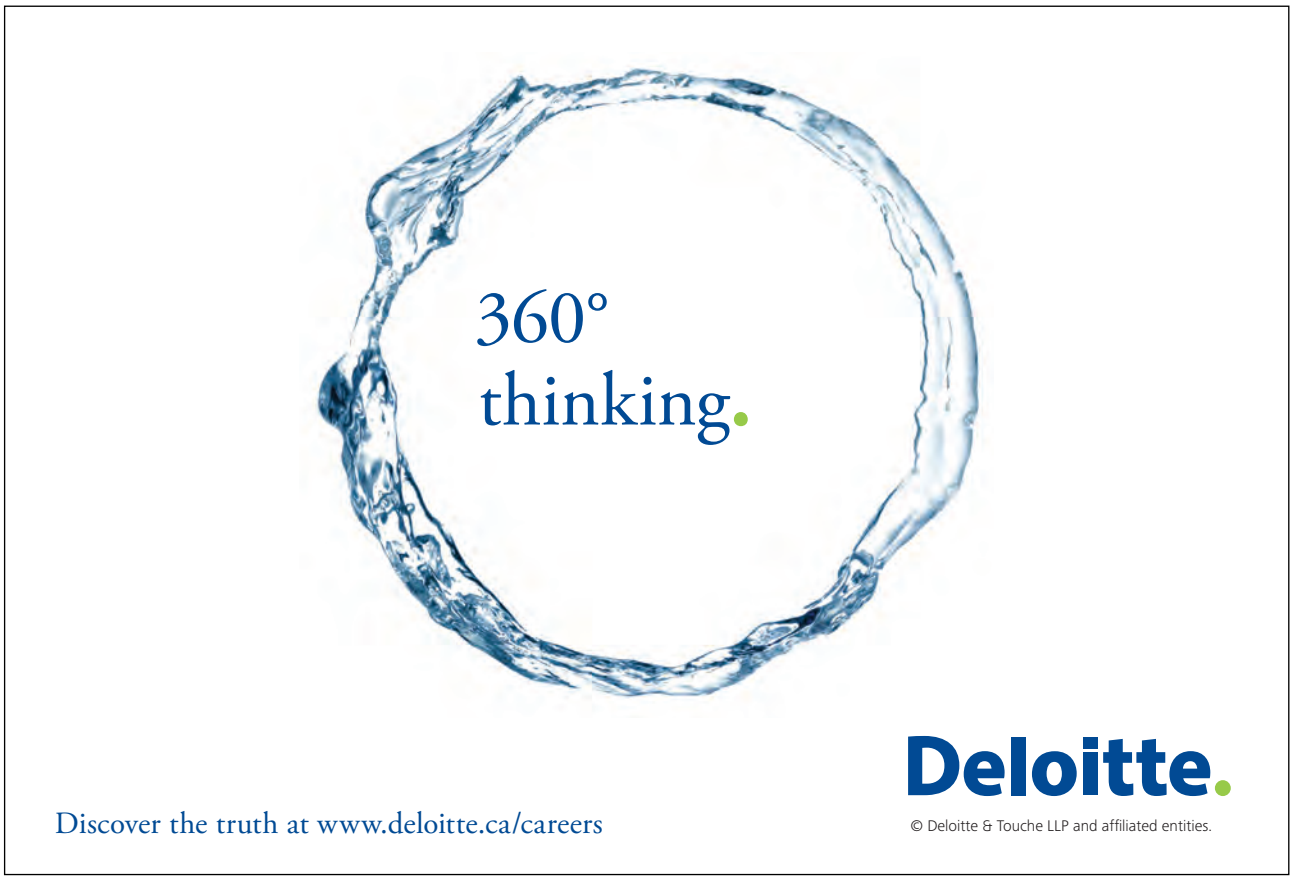

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Introduction

The information contained in this book is a tool providing you with inspiration and practical guidance to start your career. This guide contains proven methods to use in your daily interactions with colleagues, managers, industry professionals, and customers—anybody that you will interact with during your career.

Read the book and gain access to my list of good advice that I know actually works based on my own experience.

About Soulaima Gourani

In December 1975, I opened my eyes for the very first time in the dusty North African country of Morocco, far away from Denmark, where I enjoy living today. I was born into a Danish/Moroccan family, and I was different from birth—a little light brown outsider with curly hair among Danish siblings my mother had from a previous marriage.

The warmth of Morocco was already replaced with the cold of Denmark in Northern Europe in the first year of my life, but I did not become a Danish citizen until I was four years old. The move from the North African surroundings was just one of many changes and relocations that strongly influenced my upbringing and unusual life and career—just like my roles as the fighting outsider and the atypical girl follow me throughout my life and become essential parts of the authentic me and my personal leadership.

I am what you might refer to as mentally homeless and have never had a place that felt like home until now. I have lived in more places than I can count. Thus, I do find it to be a complicated question when people ask me, "Where are you from?"

No fairy tale

The story of my childhood is not exactly a fairy tale. It was marked by a firm, proud, authoritarian, and temperamental Moroccan upbringing within narrow bounds and the fundamental view that age is pivotal in all matters and that, therefore, the parents are the highest authority—and obedience has never been one of my strong suits! Therefore, my childhood was something that I just wanted to get over and done with.

It would prove to take more than thirty years before I understood my roots, my family, my culture, my heritage, and, in particular, my father. I did not come to this understanding until after my father's death when I visited his family in Morocco.

As a family, we never really settled in the places that we have lived. We were quite different from our Danish neighbors, and a child can sense when other people look down on them. It marked me a lot, and unfortunately, I found myself resenting my own roots. For many years, I had a hard time accepting the fact that I am only half-Danish.

I refused to learn to speak Moroccan, and I refused to see myself as a half-Danish. Therefore, I did not get to understand my roots. As a child, I often felt embarrassed about my background. My name, last name, color—I questioned everything. My Moroccan father did not exactly fit into the nonexotic Danish towns with his dark skin and different features combined with his impulsive and straightforward personality. Now I understand that I have an innate gift and that my diversity is an asset.

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Ultra-ambitious

I am and have always been ultra-ambitious, but nobody expected that I would go far in life. Nobody on the Danish side of my family has ever graduated from high school.

I never experienced getting any support in relation to my ambitions.

In grade 4, my teacher even said to me that I should lower my ambitions since I most likely would not make it very far because I was a girl, dark, and named Soulaima. That experience only gave me an even stronger desire to aim higher.

Thirteen-year-old girl missing . . .

During my childhood, I was really the outsider—the different dark-skinned girl in a "white ghetto" among serious village people. I did not fit in at all. I even, for shorter periods, experienced being bullied in school by my classmates. I was different through and through, and I spend many hours alone with a jumble of emotions that I cannot share with others.

Everything in me was screaming, and I packed my stuff and ran away from home. I was reported missing in the newspapers: 13 year old girl missing. I was sent to a children's institution, where I was quickly characterized as bright and well functioning.

I was offered to come into family care, and later, I moved into a youth institution. In Danish context, it was an atypical and tough upbringing, which certainly did not make it obvious for me to pursue a career with the national and international recognitions that I have today.

After I graduated from trade school at twenty years old, I moved to Switzerland, seeking new experiences. I started as an export technician. I studied for four years, and during those years, I went on training placements in Luxembourg and Norway. I met my husband when I lived and studied in the Danish town of Odense. That was almost twenty years ago.

After I started my professional career, the business world began noticing this energetic, ambitious, and industrious person. Against all odds, Soulaima Gourani slowly became a name that people recognized, and then I started working in exciting job positions for world-renowned companies. I was headhunted from one job to the next.

I completed my MBA in 2007. Fourteen days later, I gave birth to our first child; and in the spring of 2009, we had our second child—this time, a baby girl.

Happiness can be felt and should be appreciated

Today I am happy—I have accepted and enjoy my fate as an inspirational provocateur and debater working with some of the largest and most demanding companies in the world. I am a company owner and thrive on being the highest authority in my own life.

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I am very much aware when I feel happy, because happiness has not been a constant factor in my life. My adversity and struggles have become important motivators for me. My mottoes are "I cannot change my childhood, but I can appreciate that it is over" and "It is not important where you come from, but it is important where you are going." Your career and personal life are all about having the courage and the ability to seize the opportunities that you run into. I believe that people can decide to become successful and reach essential goals by means of hard work.

Luck or hard work?

You are probably thinking that you have to be lucky to have a successful career. Luck is only part of it. There are four essential factors in creating a successful career:

VISION

If you do not have a vision, you will not know where you are going or what resources (money, people, energy, etc.) you will need to get there. The future will come no matter what, so you might as well be the one to create it. A vision is critical for finding the right direction in your career and your life.

Do you know where you want to go?

It is important to set aside time to create a plan and to find time and peace to think about what you really want. *Don't try to set your true goals while you're in a stressful and pressure-filled environment, as your brain doesn't function very well under these conditions. One needs a sense of clarity to make the right long-term strategic decisions*. If you are stressed, it is very difficult to remove yourself from everyday activities and study things with a bird's-eye view—which is necessary when trying to come up with some good ideas about your desired future.

My advice is that you find a peaceful place where you cannot be disturbed. A vision does not have to be a detailed plan, and you do not have to worry about whether your vision is realistic. The vision should include professional, social, or spiritual goals. You should define visions for your level of commitment, the quality of your work, your competencies, your self-development, your network, and your image. For example, you may envision becoming the most influential person in industry X or Y, earning more than $2 million a year, being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, or even something more down-to-earth. Whatever your vision is, it should be ambitious and meaningful to you.

TIP: Your vision represents the greatest thing that you can imagine happening in your life. A vision must be a great goal that will make you happy and motivated. The next step is to describe how you will feel once you have fulfilled your vision. It is almost impossible to achieve your goals without the help of other people, so you should carefully consider whom to involve.

My ten-year vision is called 3, 6, 9, 10. This means I know where I would like to be when I turn forty-five. My vision is so clear, measurable, and easy to communicate so that everybody can understand it and contribute to it. When I have fulfilled my vision, I will of course define a new vision to pursue.

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COURAGE TO EXECUTE

There are millions of excellent ideas that will never be realized, because although many people have great ideas, only a few have what it takes to turn them into reality. You need courage to realize your ideas. But what is courage?

The American philosopher Henry D. Thoreau in the nineteenth century said that "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." This means that most of us lack the courage to live the life we dream about. To have the courage to pursue our dreams despite knowing that we risk failure is perhaps the greatest form of courage.

When you consider that among the top ten things people regret on their deathbed being they did not live a life true to themselves, then you really realize how important courage is.

TIMING

You must also know when the timing is right for you to carry out your ideas and plans. It is my experience that the perfect timing exists, but sometimes you just need to give it a little nudge! Don't just sit and wait for things to fall into place.

LUCK

This is where the notorious luck comes into the picture. Luck, luck, and, again, luck. What is luck? Luck is something good happening to a person by coincidence.

Sigmund Freud was of the opinion that the belief in luck was caused by people's desire not to take personal responsibility for their choices. The more I think about it, the more I realize that yes, I have been lucky at times. I have ended up in situations or have sought out situations, gone places, contacted people, or taken chances that later turned out to be important for my success—but if that is because of luck, well, it is also a combination of the following:

- Hard work
- Focus
- Courage
- Network

What do you think is important for achieving success?

You have to anticipate adversity

It is impossible to avoid adversity. What is important is how you tackle adversity. Do you give up, or does it make you stronger? Adversity makes me stronger. Throughout my upbringing, I developed some qualities and survival techniques that still play an important part in my drive for success in my career today. The foundation for my personal leadership, my values, my focus, and my sense of responsibility can be tracked all the way back to my challenging childhood. The days of hardship have been transformed into something very positive.

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However, I have to admit that I as an adult have had to learn to enjoy life, to relax, and to create more humane working conditions for myself. I have to admit that I have had to work very hard to break the patterns and convictions that I had been carrying. I have had to change my belief that everything you do must be either painful or at least very difficult. Just because something is really difficult or almost impossible, it doesn't mean that I should always accept the task. It had been a long tradition of mine to take on impossible projects—just to challenge myself to the maximum. With this approach, I consequently had not been unconditionally successful in everything that I had done. However, it has been a great learning experience.

I would like to give you the opportunity to take a few shortcuts by offering you access to the best advice that I have received, learned, and experienced throughout the years.

Times are changing

Not long ago, it was possible to predict someone's future paycheck based on their academic performance. Times are changing; we are moving away from the concept that a high IQ alone equates to a successful career. On the contrary, having a high IQ has almost become an impediment to career success because companies seek more than intellectual competence. Entities and managers are looking for someone in whom they can place their trust. This trend of valuing trust above knowledge and intelligence will be intensified as the world becomes increasingly complex. Trust will become the most important prerequisite for growth in all organizations.

Individualism is a company asset

Something exciting is happening in management these days. Increasingly, charismatic individuals are considered valued employees. It will become more and more accepted to be yourself, authentic and personal. This is really good because now is your time to shine!

Previously, employees were expected to be company people, devoted to the company without any focus on themselves or their personal lives. Today, career and private life are intertwined; personal stories arouse identification with others. Increasingly, young people want to work for companies and managers that understand and appreciate that employees who live full lives are well-positioned to make positive and creative contributions to the company.

'Soft' skills are in high demand

Do you intend to become a success? Then you should understand that your specialized knowledge must be combined with the ability to collaborate, motivate, and communicate with other people. Many less-educated and "self-made" people do far better in the business world than you might expect despite the fact that their IQ is average. These people can arouse confidence in others, and they have the ability to get others to agree with them. They can sell a good idea and get people to support them, and their ideas and suggestions.

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Young professionals that are in demand know that emotional intelligence is one of the three strongest and most sought-after competencies. The other two are integrity and creativity. One's Emotional Quotient (EQ) is a measure of how effective one is at understanding themselves and others in order to adapt to and cope with the immediate surroundings to successfully deal with environmental demands. Employees who possess and continually develop their EQ, integrity, and creativity will increase their value to their managers, companies, and customers.

A good leader must understand himself/herself in order to understand others. By 2015, three to four generations will be working together. In 2020, it will be approximately five generations. This will be the first time that so many generations will be living and working together. It will be an enormous challenge to understand one another and get the best out of one another's differences, strengths, and challenges.

In many organizations, there is still much ignorance on how to attract, retain, and develop employees of different generations. This is with good reason because there is no single recipe. Age, diversity and generational understanding is your, your boss's, and your company's next big challenge. It will place huge demands on your overall EQ.

People have become less authoritarian than they were before. The number of younger employees is less than the number of more mature employees. People follow those whom they trust and listen to those who do sensible things. Create something meaningful or significant, as I usually stress. Your EQ is there—so incredibly central. Use it if you want people to listen and follow you. It may eventually be accepted that a person's IQ cannot be used to predict a person's success, either in personal life or in business—a realization that has already made Daniel Goleman an award-winning author.

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In my recent work with my book *Take Power Over Your Career*, I have confirmed that there is no correlation between how smart people are and how successful they can become.

After ten years of mapping managers and their business skills to build, foster, and expand professional relationships, I find that EQ is more important than other personality traits and exceeds IQ as the most relevant factor in achieving success in business, and in life.

Your career is about relationships

Over the course of your career you will meet many people. Some of them will have a positive and enormous effect on your career. It will be nearly impossible to foresee who those people will be. What is most important is to know how to develop, manage, and nurture business relationships. Being or becoming comfortable meeting new people is a skill that you must master in order to succeed.

Here are some critical elements that will bolster your relationship success:

- Your personality brought about by your EQ (your EQ manages mutual trust and chemistry between you and others)
- Your current power base (your existing network)
- Your current and future skills (your potential)
- Identifying what the other person can get out of the relationship (it's not all about you)

The big question is whether you inspire confidence in others. Their trust depends on what they know about you and your life. What personal history are you willing to share? What questions do you ask to help others open up to you and talk about what lies in their hearts? You can measure the strength of a relationship based on the number of times you have come to an agreement with each other, the number of personal stories involving each other, and how familiar you have become and will remain over time with each other.

Networking involves value-based relationship selling

If you want to get results, you must be good at selling yourself. Do you have a great idea, one key issue, or do you just want to be an employee in a business? Whatever the situation, you must learn to sell.

I call this value-based relationship selling (you sell yourself, your ideas, and your key issues). Think of this as trading knowledge and skills. You are a merchant, and others can buy from you or from the competition.

Do you see all of your stakeholders as your customers?

If you want to accomplish something in your career, you must communicate clearly so that people understand and remember you.

Consider the following statements. How many can you answer *YES* to?

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1. Do you leave an impression on other people, or do they easily forget you shortly after they meet you?
2. Do people contact you, or are you the one often putting the effort into a relationship?
3. When people see you, do they smile and greet you, or do they barely look at you?
4. Do people remember your name?
5. Do people remember what you said when you were last together?
6. Do people trust or distrust you? Do other people recommend you to people in their network?
7. Are you invited to join exciting tasks, meetings, and events?

How well you develop and maintain a network of colleagues, industry professionals, advisors, and customers is a determining factor of how successful you will be throughout your career. Get started early in your career developing and improving your networking skill.

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Trust is Key

Trust is a relationship essential

Being trustworthy is a sought after quality that is indispensable to your career. In order to build trust, you have to enter into dialogue with other people and be aware of how you are perceived. It is well understood that we live in a society based on social networks, which means that we depend on relationships to achieve our individual and organizational successes. Your ability to build trusting relationships with people who are loyal to you, and to whom you are loyal, is a prerequisite for gaining access to contacts, contracts, influence, and information. Companies are increasingly choosing employees that are memorable and trustworthy as this will be beneficial to the company's performance.

Your professional skills and knowledge are no longer the key deciding factors. Your manager and your company want to know something about how and through whom you increase your knowledge. They recognize this as a predictor of how successful you will be in the company.

After reading the Danish philosopher Søren Harnow Klausen's report on knowledge and the knowledge society, I was inspired to share some of his points and my thoughts. Since the 1990s, many scientists and philosophers have tried to define what it means to be part of a knowledge society. The knowledge society's work environment is characterized by the employee's inability to easily cope with all aspects of their job due to ever-increasing complexity. According to Søren Harnow Klausen, we are in the middle of a 'new'capitalism phase, often referred to as knowledge capitalism. The challenge is to understand it and live in it.

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Trust-driven business

In the next five to ten years, we will increasingly recognize that we have to specialize and become known as a knowledge and management society. In a country like Denmark, growth can no longer come from the production of goods. We cannot compete on price or quality. In the next five years, companies will apply their knowledge about human resource management to outperform their most significant competitors in the global market. The keywords will be management, trust, knowledge, and networking. What does this mean for you? In the next couple of years, the ability to make other people trust you will be your most valuable asset. This quality will become the most sought-after competence for both managers and organizations.

The caveat is that once trust is lost it is very difficult to recover, if it can ever be recovered.

Confidence is about being able to trust other people and knowing how they will react when problems arise. So confidence has a lot to do with predictability. Open, honest, consistent, and predictable individuals will almost always inspire confidence. Thus, people know that the rules will not change suddenly, and that will make them more willing to take risks and walk an extra mile to work with you and help you achieve your goals and the goals of your organization.

Trust as a foundation

Two people who have worked to develop a personal and professional relationship based on trust can much easily obtain mutual benefits from the relationship than if they would have only focused on products, reasoned matters and formalities as a basis for their interaction.

Research illustrates that people buy goods, ideas, and products from a person when there are three aspects present in a relationship:

- *Trust*. Customers must feel that they can count on you and that what they see and hear is they get (you are authentic).
  Privacy. What one says, shows, and thinks remain between you and that person. There must be mutual confidentiality between the two of you; this requires that you also give something of yourself in this relationship which is both professional and informal.
- *Taken care of*. To be able to feel being taken care of, people must have a genuine feeling that you are interested in making them a success and that you regularly expend effort to help them reach their goals.

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You Must Have the IT Factor

Knowledge is meant to be shared

As you embark on your professional career consider: What good will your high IQ do if no one knows what you have to offer? You must disseminate your knowledge through articles, blogs, lectures, social media, etc., so that people can discover what you know and what you can do. Modesty is not the best policy! You must therefore think carefully about how you can communicate your skills to the world. Knowledge has always been, and will remain, a coveted commodity. You should ask yourself: Do I have a regular habit of sharing my knowledge with the people that I encounter? One used to be able to keep their knowledge to themselves and be rewarded as a specialist, but today, no one wants to work with someone who does not disseminate their knowledge. The success of a company depends upon employees who share their knowledge.

For companies, it is much too expensive and risky to have employees who do not generously share their knowledge. The reality is, knowledge is only valuable when it is shared. Additionally, certain types of knowledge are typified by an uncertain shelf-life. It is virtually impossible to predict exactly when specific types of knowledge will become worthless, but it will happen! We know from experience that current computer technologies will become irrelevant, that a particular vacuum cleaner will no longer be the best at cleaning floors, and that early manufacturing processes will become outdated. The same thing is true for knowledge.

You should therefore think critically about how often you increase your knowledge as well as the sources of your new knowledge and inspiration. Useful and respected sources are available for those who are looking long and hard enough. Access knowledge will contribute to sustaining the growth of your career. More importantly, how you apply your knowledge will determine the degree of your success.

If you regularly share your knowledge with others you will be perceived as the go-to person when information and insight is needed. Do not be afraid of sharing your knowledge; doing so helps increase your market value. The downside of keeping your knowledge "close-to-the-chest" is that people will have a tendency to not share their knowledge with you and that you will be increasingly less knowledgeable than the person who generously shares their valuable knowledge. If you find it difficult to share your knowledge it will also be difficult for you to sell it—your knowledge will be useless.

As a recent college graduate, your newly acquired knowledge is only relevant in a very short period of time, and then it is ousted by newer knowledge. The reality is, your market value is difficult to sustain based on a piece of paper from an educational institution or a workplace. It is incumbent upon you to continually increase your knowledge and share it generously.

Personal interest and involvement is a critical factor

Are you in a company that sells something, or are you in a situation where you must convince others of something? Are you dependent on the support of others? If so, read carefully. Too many people see it as their task to keep a cool, objective distance from their surroundings, such as their customers and colleagues, believing that they should remain an impartial mediator of facts.

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Too many professionals believe that they serve their career and their company's interest best by being detached and consider it unprofessional to get involved personally. They believe that they have obtained or will obtain their success because of their objective, impersonal, and transaction-oriented relationships with their customers, colleagues, and partners. I believe they have achieved a measure of success in spite of this practice; otherwise, they would have probably achieved even more in less time.

I have heard people say that they leave their personality at the door when they enter the workplace. This is misguided "wisdom." My point is that personal involvement, which is how well you understand yourself and others in order to adapt to your immediate surroundings and current demands, is indispensable. It is a direct extension of your EQ and will advance your career. To paint a clear picture, try to imagine a business professional looking for the most dispassionate, matter-of-fact adviser, partner, or salesperson—not very likely. Business people want to feel that the person they are talking to is concerned about them as an individual, not a mere business interest.

Try and remember the last time you felt that your bank manager, dentist, or accountant was interested in *you* on a personal and attentive level. You might need to dig deep into your memory. It was a good feeling, right? That feeling gave you the urge to call them the next time you had a problem or even recommend them to others.

If you can create trusting relationships with your clients, colleagues, and managers, you will have a unique platform for your career. You would then constitute an extremely valuable asset to the company you work for, manage, or own because you increase brand value and create loyalty.

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There is also a more commercial benefit to building relationships based on personal involvement—the deeper and more comprehensive your relationship, the longer the relationship will last; and therefore, more earnings can be acquired.

Taking a personal interest in those that you encounter during your career does not mean that your professionalism will be compromised. Your professionalism will always be your entry ticket. Presenting yourself as an authentic, trustworthy professional will help you create long-running relationships. Occasionally, you may find yourself in a situation where you cannot serve all customers or cannot be everything to everyone. It is a fact of life that sometimes the personal chemistry between individuals is not suitable for sustaining a fruitful professional relationship. Do not be discouraged by this infrequent occurrence. You will experience greater job satisfaction, creativity, development, and synergy with the loyal customers you have and the many new ones you will get! What remains is to think about how to work with relationships.

Strive to be introspective over the course of your career. Do not shy away from asking yourself pointed questions: How involved am I with my customers, clients, and partners? How do I express my personal interest? What can I do to improve my ability to connect to them?

Human beings are guided by emotions

EQ (emotional quotient) measures emotional intelligence, which is the ability to assess what is happening to you emotionally. Most of us work in a job with responsibilities greater than in our previous jobs. Specialists are being forced to become broader and broader in their capabilities. Even positions that were previously categorized as being best suited for introverted and internally oriented individuals have come to depend on cooperation and human contact. Many studies about neuropsychology suggest that our emotions have their own logic and that our business choices are not entirely rational. All the while, we try to give the impression that we act on the basis of analysis, logic, and rationale.

EQ can be boiled down to intuition, compassion, empathy, self-awareness, social skills, the ability to control and self-control, and our understanding of others. In writing this book, I contacted one of the leading headhunters in Denmark, and he told me that they regularly test the EQ of all of their recruits. Basically, he finds that the managers who understand themselves and are in-tune with their emotional states are often the ones who understand others well.

We are all born with a certain temperament that affects our EQ. Fortunately, everyone can improve their EQ. Because your EQ changes throughout your life you should test yourself regularly.

- A quick test may include the following questions:
- Are you quick-tempered or good-tempered?
- Do you get angry quickly or rarely?
- Do you express your feelings?
- Do you hold a grudge for a long time, or do you quickly get over it?

Your answer may well indicate how much you are aware of your emotions and able to master them. Psychology experts say that people with high EQs have four important attributes:

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- Integrity
- Responsibility
- Courage
- Absorption

In order to raise your EQ, it is essential that you accept that you cannot just read about the matter. You must go out and practice and not be afraid to make mistakes. Your efforts and talents should be practiced and continuously evaluated.

You must continually develop yourself—there is no finish line

Working to enhance your EQ is a lifelong process without a finish line. All of the people that you will encounter during your career are as individual as you are. Because you will faced with working with a variety of personalities constantly develop your EQ

You must prepare yourself for a lifelong marathon, where you need to develop the following:

- Your social skills
- Your positive attitude toward other people
- Your comfort zone expansion
- Your healthy attitude toward yourself
- Your effective approach to life

You will encounter new problems, new relationships, new technology, and the like. But the question is, how do you deal with these changes? Your reaction is nothing but an acquired habit that you have chosen to live with! Your time is better spent on taking care of your customers, your network, or your ability to engage in trusting relationships than on chasing another professional credential.

The next time you meet another person, make an effort to be interesting and interested—this will give you better results than any elevator speech that you can ever write.

Passion trumps expertise

It is my experience that people don't remember passionate people—people with power of penetration. The combination of passion and energy is stronger than academic prowess alone. Are you academically talented and passionate at the same time? If you are, you are obviously in a really strong position. Having both qualities maximizes your potential and allows others to see your authenticity! Authentic people take pride in what they do by demonstrating their passion. It is therefore important that you engage in work that you have passion for and execute it with energy. Passion creates positive energy and the two have become valuable and desirable attributes because they produce results.

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Do you have doubts? Maybe this will convince you. Think about how often you judge a person based on their energy and charisma. The impression you leave will have a more lasting effect than what you said or did. Think of how you react when you meet someone who is enthusiastic, energetic, informed, and excited. They are contagious, and you remember that person better than someone who is quiet and timid. The energy you bring to the table and leave in the room becomes part of your business image, your business card. Passion and energy balanced with respect for others and their ideas is the virtual card that you want to leave with people. It will make you a highly sought-after colleague and future leader.

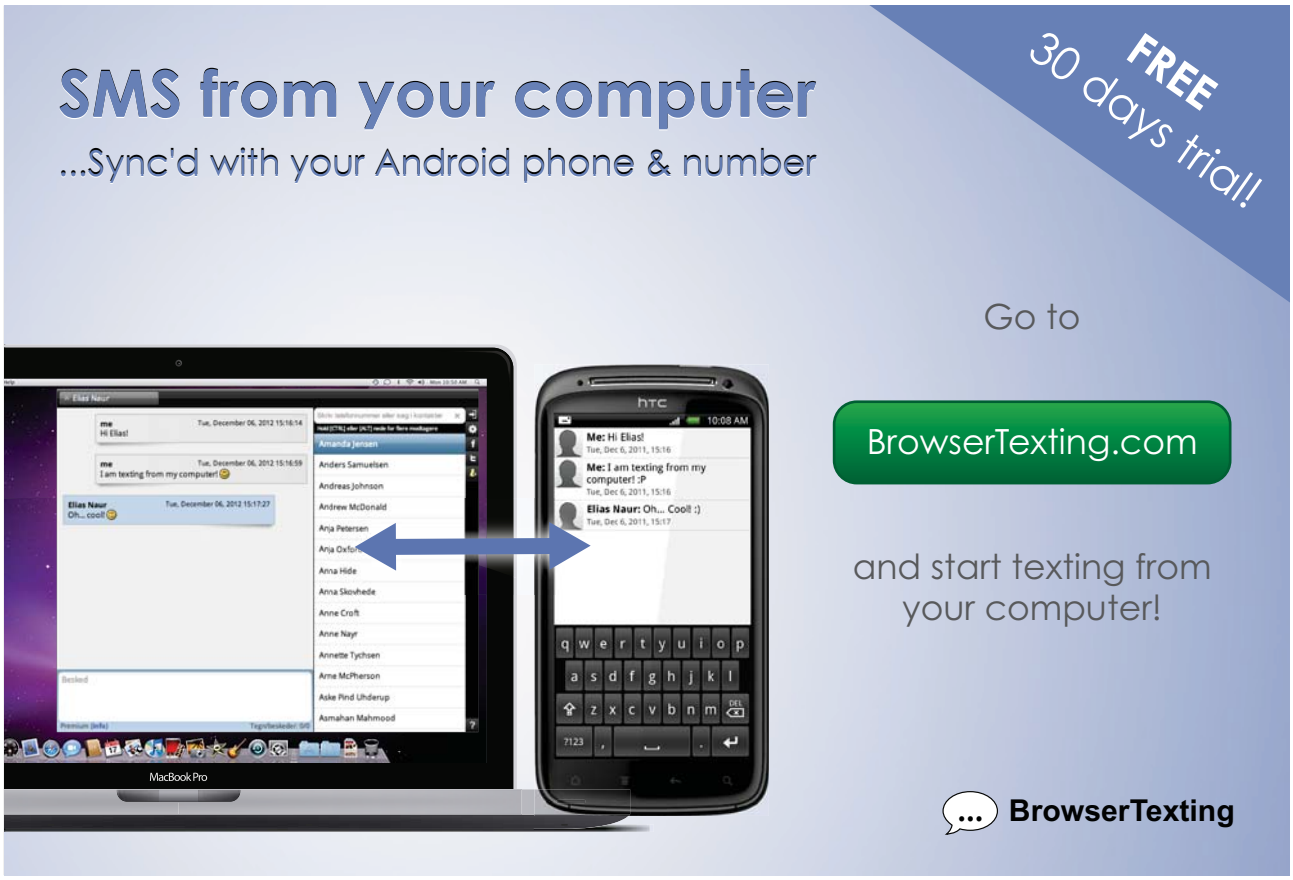
"Shining eyes" effect

Passion and energy produce what has been called the "shining eyes" effect, which simply means that one has a radiant sparkle in their eyes. People enjoy working with someone whose eyes are vibrant, smiling, convincing, and compelling. Look at some recent photos of yourself. What do you see? Is there life and enthusiasm or are they the kind of eyes that you would not be fascinated with or drawn to if you saw them in another individual? If you want to exhibit "shining eyes" find your passion!

The "Ctrl + C" is the opposite of authenticity

Businesses can no longer compete on price and product features alone. To succeed, they must be able to come up with something that cannot be copied and that will distinguish them from their competitors. Companies dream of being original.

This is where you as an employee enter the picture. Companies dream of having employees that customers and partners remember and love. Your ability to build emotional relationships with colleagues, customers, and partners are essential to companies. You can help them achieve their goals by virtue of being your authentic self.



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If you can get people to like you, then you create emotional ties with them and become someone they want to work with and someone they want to buy from. Your energy makes you stand out as passionate (which makes you easy to remember). A person with this ability is someone companies like to employ.

Too often we strive to be cool, detached, and clinical in our dealings with other people. This means that most encounters produce a bland impression. This is a shame because it's so simple to do something about it. Think about it. We remember those who instill confidence. We have confidence in those who remind us of something we recognize from other safe encounters. We are, as the renowned psychologist Robert Zajonc writes, "eager to choose the ones we feel comfortable with." He emphasized that if we like something, we will remember it. Therefore, it is important that people like you. The important thing is that you develop qualities and refined behaviors that build and maintain your ability to engender likeability.

Your market value is created through your energy and your ability to network and build emotional bonds with the people that you will encounter over the course of your career. Therefore you must become expert at how to map, maintain, and nurture professional relationships. Your biggest challenge will be to make yourself distinguishable from everyone else. Relationship expertise will prevent you from being a copy of the many new professionals entering the job market.

Find your motivation

It is important to know what motivates you because it is your so-called driving force that will take you forward toward your goals. Identify what makes you "hungry." Write it down. Your motivation is divided into two types:

- internal motivation
- external motivation

Understanding the two types of motivation is rather intuitive. Internal motivation is sourced from within. There is less of a concern for the rewards of an activity than with the satisfaction of engaging in the activity itself. The process, not the goal, is important. External motivation is sourced outside the individual. For example: validation by friends, family, colleagues, and supervisors; tangible rewards such as pay increases, promotions, and job titles. Arguably, intrinsic, or inner motivation is the strongest form of motivation as it is not subject to changes by outside sources.

Your motivation drives your performance and is enhanced by three key factors:

- *Faith*. As they say, faith can move mountains. Believe that you can. Your faith will feed your passion and vice versa, and it will be instrumental in making other people believe in you. It's just that simple, if you believe in yourself, other people will also believe in you.
- *Commitment*. If you want something, it is important that you have the ability to override other needs when it really counts. A very simple, yet very important question needs to be answered: How much do you want it? The degree to which you want something will determine the level of commitment necessary to acquire it.
- *Focus.* You will be continually diverted and distracted. Be good at staying focused for the long haul. To do this you must draw upon your faith and commitment.

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The GROW model

Alan Fine and Rebecca R. Merrill developed the popular GROW model. It is a model you can use when you want to utilize your motivation to achieve realization.

G = Goal: What is it you want to achieve?

R = Reality: Under what conditions must you realize your goals?

O = Options: What are your options?

W = Way forward: What actions must you take to go from wanting to achieve your goal to achieving it?

When you evaluate your personal and career goals, you should focus on facts and actions you have control over. Focus on your own skills, abilities, and preparation. Only when you have a grip on yourself should you begin to take responsibility for leading and inspiring others.

How do you know that you are doing the right thing in terms of how you will move forward? The simple answer is "you just know," but it is much more complicated than that. In the book titled *The Heart of Change*, written by Harvard Business School professor John Kotter and Dan Cohen from Deloitte Consulting, you can read that it is extremely incredibly important that you use your thoughts to continuously support your motivation and that you trust yourself.

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Consider Meeting New People an Adventure

Become someone everyone remembers

The key to getting people to remember you is to intensify the energy that radiates from you. This energy is the power generated by your high EQ. It is what people "fall for" and remember you by. Whether they will keep in touch with you and continue their enthusiasm for your energy is a reliable signal of your capacity to be reliable, conscientious, and trustworthy.

Let me try to put this into perspective. Every week, I ask around one hundred to two hundred people about their ability to remember others. It's surprising how little people actually remember about others. They do not remember the e-mails they received, the participants of the meetings they attended, or the person who left a message on their answering machines. It's not because they are senile, but because everyone is so busy and bombarded with e-mails, messages, meetings, and more.

How to be memorable

Do people find it difficult to remember and recognize you? If so, do not despair.

The recipe for becoming memorable is relatively simple. Many of us can increase our rate of success in achieving our career goals through training in the following areas:

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- points and views in speech and writing
- authenticity
- humor
- physical appearance

These areas are all elements that influence people's professional opinion of you and thus your chances of increasing your dynamism and market value.

Do you have a charismatic personality? If yes, how do you express it?

Do you know somebody with a charismatic personality that you can study? If yes, who? What can you learn from them?

Your answers may indicate what you need to work on.

Developing loyal relationships

Your professional success is about your willingness to bond with others and to invest yourself in the relationship. It is about the chemistry that you dare to create with other people.

Therefore, you must be reliable, authentic, and likeable. To be perceived as reliable, you must mean what you say and do what you feel is right. Authenticity speaks to your principles, personal style, and professional goals. Likeability is about being curious about other people and being interested in helping them achieve their goals.

Be interested and interesting

When you meet someone for the first time, it is very important that you spend the first couple of minutes wisely. What do you talk about? Is it something that creates trust or just small talk?

- Always strive to create a pleasant dialogue. That alone will make people remember you.
- Be sincerely interested and curious. Ask and listen.
- Find out how you can help each other—be sure to mention your own qualities in an easy and elegant way so that the person you are talking to can quickly get an idea about who you are, what you can do, and your professional goals.

People remember you better if you replace "My title is …" with something like "I help people with …" This way, you become value-based in your dialogue, and it makes it easier for people to understand what you actually do. If you are a very young person without much experience, then make an effort to find out what it is that makes you special. Everybody has a special competence from which other people can benefit—you just need to identify it.

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Handling encounters like a professional

In this section, I go through the necessary elements of exchanges with people in order to create and develop a strong relationship.

1. Be personal—give something of yourself so that you create a trusting atmosphere. You can build mutual trust in each other in five minutes if you follow these simple steps.

The 70/30 rule

The 70/30 rule simply states that 70 percent of the time that you are with another person, you can talk about professional matters such as a project, a problem, a sale, etc.

In the remaining 30 percent of time, you should talk about something that is personal, but not private—something that you are pondering, considering, something that interests you, bothers you, worries you, or pleases you.

Ask the person questions about these topics. Pay attention to the short personal stories that people share with you. Give something of yourself so that you become informal and personal. Follow up on your shared information the next time you meet. If you remain professional, formal, and distanced, it will affect your chances of building a relationship with the person. You will miss out on a valuable opportunity to establish the kind of trust that is the foundation of fruitful professional relationships.

2. Be present. Keep eye contact—focus on this conversation that you are having right now and don't think about what you will be doing next, whether you have a new text message, or if someone has just Facebooked you. People can feel it if you are not present and it will leave a bad impression.

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From formal to informal

Make an effort to get to know people better. Always ask good questions on three levels to get a good idea about whom you are talking to:

The professional level. Ask questions regarding the other person's organization and/or industry. Examples of questions are as follows: How is your organization doing right now? What are the industry's biggest challenges right now? Which initiatives do you see as the most appropriate in this situation? What changes do you foresee happening within the next one to two years? You can come up with more good questions on your own.

The technical level. Ask questions that touch on the other person's professional skills so that you know what they can do, what they want, and what they dream about achieving during their professional career.

The personal level. Ask questions that touch on the other person's personal life without getting into their private matters. What does he want to get out of his life, generally?

Always ask the kind of questions that you would like to be asked. Be focused so that the other person feels that you would genuinely like to know something about them.

For example, inquire about the person's preferences in culture, food, or music so that next time you meet perhaps the business encounter can include their preference for one of these.

3. Show respect for other people and their time. People hate people who waste their time or prevent them from doing their work. This is not the way you want to be remembered. Keep your appointments and be brief and to the point. Respect the fact that you are talking with a person who might be in a hurry because of a deadline or other pressures.
4. Evaluate your efforts—ask other people what you can do better if you feel that the relationship is not developing as desired. People appreciate your sincere interest.

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Networking is King

Why networking is king

Networking is a way of thinking, working, and being—it is, at once, an intellectual, social, and creative activity. A network is the term for group of people that share a connection. The broader a person's network the more expansive is their access to knowledge, inspiration, and influence. You may already be a member of a network.

The discipline of networking is all about identifying whom you know, nurturing the people that you know, and expanding your network with new people that you need to know. All your current and desired relationships should be categorized so that you will have an overview of whom you know, how well you know them, and the strength of each current relationship to help you determine level of loyalty that exists for each one. You should also identify the type and number of relationships that you need to establish for your network so that it can facilitate your reaching immediate and future goals. This is called strategic networking.

We live in a society characterized by too much information, too little concrete knowledge, rapid change, and sudden needs and challenges. Without a doubt, your manager will expect you to be able to create relationships with people in order to build strong loyal, trusting relationship with them on behalf of the company.

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Once you have built a strong network of competent people who are exceptionally talented in areas where you are weak, you will represent a much larger area of knowledge than you would if you were on your own. Your network is your safest bet when it comes to development of competences. You can educate yourself and take all the courses you wish, but nothing compares with a loyal competent network—it's compact, informative, and the direct path to successful individual and organizational performance. Your network is a key component in keeping you prepared for change.

Motive and mission

It is critical that your networking activities be focused. You must therefore work to examine your networking motives and create a networking mission. The alternative to strategic networking is unstructured and random networking with lackluster results. This is a huge waste of your time and the time of people that you encounter.

The primary reason that people do not get what they want is that they have not identified what they want.

Your motives for networking might include:

- To do something that is good for you (including more sales/more influence)
- To do something for others (your customers and colleagues)
- To contribute to the community/industry (the big picture)

Write down as many motives as you can think of that capture your purpose.

You can arrive at your networking mission by considering some of the following questions, please be very specific with your answers:

- Develop a networking mission
- What are my competencies?
- What are my weak areas?
- Which of my current contacts can help me develop my competencies?
- What type of new contacts can help me develop my competencies?
- What are the needs of my company?
- What can I contribute to my network to help others achieve their goals?

Write down as many motives that you can think of that focus on what you want to achieve through networking. Use your answers to these questions to craft a brief mission statement (no more than ten short but specific sentences).

We know that people who dedicated to networking have easier access to **inspiration, information, and influence** both inside and outside of the workplace. Companies that systematically network perform better than companies that do not. Companies that perform well financially are 57% more likely to use relational tools and social networks than poorer performing companies.

Here are a few facts:

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- *19% of companies regularly use networking to identify individuals with relevant knowledge and relevant competences.*
- *21% of the companies have, despite the financial crisis, recently increased their investments in tools that are necessary to develop relationships and networks.*
- *27% use it to spread innovative ideas.*

Your dedication to networking and the skill that you are developing in this activity will go a long way in helping you to develop that "IT" factor that will make you a much sought-after employee!

Identify and use your advantages

Typically, people believe that extroverts find it easier than introverts to network! This has not been proven. Both types of individuals have their strengths and challenges. What type are you?

It is said too often that extroverts typically find it easier than introverts to be successful working with other people. My view is that it is not that simple. Introverts have some obvious advantages when it comes to networking. They are extremely good at one-to-one relationships and often establish deeper relationships. This happens less often for extroverts.

Below is an overview of the strengths and challenges of introverts and extroverts.

The introvert: strengths	**The extrovert: strengths**
Is often reflective and deliberate	Can more easily express thoughts/feelings
Makes room for dialogue	Is energized by dialogue with other people
Spends time developing relationships	Likes to meet new people
Loyal, often has a few good and strong relationships	Enjoys being in groups and at bigger gatherings
The introvert: challenges	**The extrovert: challenges**
Needs more breaks to recharge before interaction with new people	May come across as superficial
Can be misunderstood due to taking a backseat role	Is speedy, can have a tendency to rush onward instead of taking the time to develop a relationship
Has limited initiative, which is important in an active dialogue with another person	Can have difficulty staying focused on one conversation/person
Lacks spontaneity, thinking before speaking can be seen as hesitant	Can have a tendency to talk more than he/she listens

If you have a sincere interest in other people, you can utilize the qualities of your type to build a relationship. Your curiosity and interest in other people are critical in creating dialogue with another person.

Be accessible and approachable

People should feel that they can come to you. You must be accessible and approachable in order to be successful at networking. A few questions can help you determine if you are accessible and approachable:

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- *Do people like you the first time they meet you?*
- *Do people think that it is easy to get in contact with you?*
- *Do people find it easy and pleasant to be you?*
- *Do you make a conscious effort to be available to people?*
- *Do you make a conscious effort to make talking to you a stress-free experience?*

It is a fact that your mood, energy level, and ability to be interested in others directly affect whether people consider you to be emotionally accessible and physically approachable.

Competence and intelligence are useless if you are not good at socializing with people and adapting to your surroundings. It is my experience that there are five qualities that enable you to reach your goals through your network:

- That you have integrity
- That you are someone people like to be with
- That you take active responsibility in a relationship
- That you have skills that others demand
- That you have a high tolerance for differences among people

Being accessible and approachable are dependent upon your ability to:

- Accept people as they are (you generally have strong social competences)
- Make space for other people (you have a positive attitude toward other people)

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- Be willing and able to adapt
- Understand your network community
- Be a good judge of character

Your willingness to go outside of your comfort zone has a direct bearing on how successful you will be at being accessible and approachable. Being willing to do only the same things that you have done in the past to meet new people will limit your success severely. Broaden your comfort zone!

If you have a real desire to manage change, you can adapt to the social challenges of networking and experience it as a positive zone of comfort. This will facilitate your ability to network with people who are different from you and who can complement your competencies.

As you move in the direction of becoming more accessible and approachable, accept that it takes time, and success doesn't always come easy. Remember that networking is about people and it takes effort. The good news is that many people successfully change their lives from living on autopilot to being active networkers. *You can do the same, if you really want to.*

Two good pieces of advice:

1. Be accepting of people as they are and let other people inspire you—be open-minded.
2. Be able to handle change and be curious about where new relationships or experiences may take you.

A good networker is open-minded, accepting, ready for change, and curious. Are you living up to these criteria?

Try to rate yourself on the following qualities:

Quality	Low	Medium	High
Open-minded			
Accepting			
Ready for change			
Curious			

Be personable, not intrusive

When I need to become familiar with people and build trust with them, I refrain from talking about my MBA, directorships, or the like. I do not share private stories that may make somebody feel uncomfortable. What story are you telling? I do not ask personal questions that will make people uneasy. Most people talk about the weather, mumble about their names, or talk more than they ask questions and such conversations are not memorable and will soon be forgotten. Your "small talk" doesn't have to be unimportant.

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I tell people that I am married to Brian (they usually laugh about that because it is not exactly every day that you hear of a Soulaima married to a Brian). I tell people that I have children and that I live in one of the old neighborhoods of Copenhagen. That tends to make people think I'm pretty down-to-earth, and it breaks any barriers. Most people have heard of or have been to my neighborhood and have questions about what it's like to live there.

I also talk about the causes I'm passionate about and how I help people through my work. It is my experience that people are more preoccupied with who I am than with my business background.

If they are convinced that I am a "good" person, it is my experience that they go far in their quest to understand my business and recommend me to others. Show people who you are and what you stand for more than your credentials or what you can "sell" them

The intent of using a portion of a meeting for personal purposes is to build trust, which enhances people's perception of your professionalism. Therefore, you should use the time you spend with someone efficiently. Before hand, research a little about the person you will meet; find out what kind of person he or she is. Do you have anything in common? You can easily get a lot of information by searching the Internet, and it's a tiny effort that pays off many times over. Now you are more likely to be remembered, to be recommended, and to become someone people would like to meet with again and again.

Relationship strength test

You know that you have a loyal relationship with someone if the person:

- always responds to your inquiries,
- forgives you for making minor mistakes,
- recommends you to others, and
- takes the time to give you a critique and complains if you do something wrong.

Are you unsure whether your network connection likes you? Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you receive a relatively quick response after contacting them? If yes, then at least they are in a dialogue with you.
- If you request a meeting, does the person respond quickly (within two days) with a positive response, which includes a suggestion for a date and time to meet?
- Do they keep appointments with you and respond to your follow-up e-mail, and do you agree on the next step?
- Are both of you eager to gain something from the relationship? Is there an exchange of questions and answers? Do you have good chemistry and flow in your dialogue?

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- Does your network connection generally keep meetings or other appointments, and if they have to cancel, do they always suggest another date? If the person cancels two to three times, it may be because of pressure of work. But often, the real reason is low priority and lack of interest to meet with you. If a meeting is cancelled without a suggestion for a new date, then it is typically a sign of an uphill battle. That should motivate you to become an even more interesting person to meet with. If you have left three or more messages, then you should stop. The person is not interested in further contact with you.
  Checklist:

1. Note if your contacts get back to you when you contact them.
2. Make sure that your contacts will not say that you leave messages, spam them with e-mails and/or text messages, and waste their time on meetings without a purpose.
3. Be moderately persistent. It is a good thing to demonstrate persistence because you want to develop a relationship, but remember to do it respectfully and in line with how they would like to be contacted and nurtured. Treat each person individually. *Listen* carefully to what the person says or writes to you.
4. People are polite, and it is not always the case that a polite answer is an invitation to further dialogue. Read between the lines to find out if the person really *wants* to meet with you. Avoid being too formal in your dialogue—be professional, yet personable. This will build more trust in you and your message.
5. Discuss with your colleagues / fellow students how you communicate (e.g., via e-mail). Add another person as a CC on all of your communication for a period of time. Then discuss if you write e-mails that people want to receive and read or if you are too distanced and professional in your communication. The trick is to write e-mails, letters, and text messages and to participate in meetings in such a manner that people will remember and have warm, positive thoughts about you.

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Networking situations

Many of us are conscious about taking advantage of and optimizing the result of each and every meeting and dialogue that we have with, for example, potential connections. However, it may be useful to keep in mind that when two people have an interaction, the relationship must go through some general phases. It is important to stress that a relationship must be managed carefully through a cycle so that it goes from being formal to informal and thereby from being 100 percent professional to becoming both professional and personal.

In addition, it makes sense to differentiate your efforts in accordance with whether the interaction will take place in person, at a conference, or at a reception. This way, you can prepare for and anticipate the type of results you want to produce.

Every time you meet people at a meeting, a reception, or a sales meeting, they will look at you subjectively. Everyone will be studying each other. People will consider their current and future relationship with you. Do they want to spend their valuable time and resources on you? The question is whether you know what they are observing?

- Your personality, which comes from your EQ (your EQ controls your mutual trust and chemistry)
- Your current power base (your existing network inside and outside of the industry)
- Your current/future competences (your potential)
- Their reward for establishing a relationship with you

Your personality should convey confidence; otherwise, people will not trust you, your products, or your company. People have become intent on finding authentic, meaningful, and trusting relationships with someone they can trust. Trust is the most important condition for establishing fruitful business relationships. But trust is also the most difficult thing to create and the easiest to lose.

Your ability to build trusting relationships in a short period of time (e.g., during a meeting) is a condition for getting access to contacts, contracts, inspiration, influence, and information. People decide within approximately ten to thirty seconds whether they trust you. Therefore, use the short period of time to sell yourself wisely. You will achieve this by being sincerely interested in the other person's needs and wishes for the future.

Fact box
The world-famous political scientist Francis Fukuyama and the equally recognized Nobel Prize winner Gary Becker confirm that the societies, leaders, and companies that build the highest level of trust will be the most long-term successful.

Business meetings

Business meetings are planned, and parties are aware that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss specific aspects of business and cooperation. Every business meeting should have three goals in mind for participants: to look forward to the meeting, to contribute as much as possible during the meeting, and to subsequently remember the meeting.

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- *Before the meeting.* Who is expected to participate in the meeting? Do you know them? What do you know about them (e.g., interests, age, sex, nationality, educational background)? How strong is your relationship? How long have you known each other? What do they think about your products? What is your history with the customer? What is their agenda, needs, and desires for the future (the next one to two years)? What does your team know about the participants? Can you find any articles about them? What do you find if you Google them?
- *During the meeting.* During the actual sales meeting, it is important to comply with the 70/30 rule. A good meeting is a meeting where the participants have an equal opportunity to participate in the dialogue. Avoid being too impersonal, professional, impartial, and distanced.
- When practical, be creative and meet someplace other than a meeting room or coffee shop. Can the goals of you planned meeting be achieved while engaging in some activity?
- Meetings with a high emotional frequency (EF) are remembered better than meetings that focus only on professional matters. How will you create and maintain a high-EF level at your meetings?
- *Follow-up.* It is important to follow up after a meeting. This should be done shortly after your physical meeting. I recommend that you follow up after a couple of days. Whether you show up in person, write an e-mail, call, send a text message, send an article or a book depends on what you think is most appropriate and what you agreed to at the meeting. Take into consideration that you must always give something to the other person, something that matters to that person. Avoid clinical e-mails and phone messages. Try to make emotional connections with your network relationships. Show your warmth and humanity. Be an honest and interesting person that people will want to spend time with.

Conferences and events

Conferences are often a waste of time if the only reason for attending is to listen to speakers and lecturers. It is great from a professional point of view, but in terms of networking you must have a broader strategy.

Conferences are a great place to network and are a lot of fun. You will encounter many types of conference goers. I have described some—try to identify the type that is most like you.

The neutral opener: Typically talks about neutral topics while standing in the buffet line or while waiting to greet the host. Takes comfort in the safe situations (food, gift table, restroom waiting line, greeting line). Does not talk much and prefers to talk with the people they happen to stand or sit next to.

Is polite but distant. Is happy when they meet someone they know because this makes them feel more comfortable. Stands in places where they do not draw too much attention and prefers the natural locations such as next to the buffet. Does not ask people for their business card and leaves the initiative to the other party.

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TIPS:

You might be a person whom people do not remember because you do not share interesting information about yourself.

Practice describing yourself in a brief interesting way so that people will remember and like you. Write down three to five standard questions that you can ask new people that you meet. Practice having a good networking dialogue. Practice taking the initiative and being more proactive. Walk around. Do not just stand still. Say hello to people you do not know and experience that it is not dangerous at all. Remember something as simple as smiling. When you show that you are happy to be there, you make it easier for other people to like you.

Camp follower: Many people act as camp followers when they are in larger groups and have to find their own way to participate.

Typically seeks out a group of people. Does not want to stand out from the crowd and does not attract too much attention. "Sneaks" into the group without being noticed. Only passively involved in what other people are talking about and does not take the floor.

TIPS:

Let people know that you are joining the group. When they look at you, take the opportunity to greet all of them. Make sure to speak in a friendly and warm voice that directs the attention to you when you speak. If more people are involved in the conversation with you, then greet all of them in the same way. Smile to leave a positive first impression!

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People tend to like people who act in the same way as they do because we can identify with them. Think of this as a tool that you need to use. Listen carefully to others and participate in the conversation so that you also get to tell who you are and why you are there.

Attention seeker: Either takes the attention in a group or is invited to do so. Laughs and often talks a bit louder than others, and people come to you. Enjoys attention and does well in the world in both formal and informal relationships. Stands where they are visible to others.

TIPS:

Remember to let other people have a chance to speak. Invite the person who is standing alone into the group.

Leave the impression of being attentive and curious by establishing eye contact and letting other people finish what they are saying. Allow other people to speak, and let other people shine. It is not necessary for you to get all of the attention. It is a good thing that you are entertaining or that people just like to be around you, but the trick is to use your ability to be the center of attention to bring other people into the game. That will make them remember you positively.

The need networker: Is not so elegant and does not intend to waste your time. Focuses on "harvesting" as many business cards as possible. Has an elevator pitch ready and scans the room to get as much as possible out of as many people as possible in the shortest possible time. Chooses to stand where they have the best overview.

TIPS:

Others might perceive you as being too goal-oriented. People turn up at events because they want to be seen, meet new people, and nurture existing relations. However, it is not generally considered good behavior if you "only" go to an event to network. Feel the pulse of the people you meet: do they want to network, or are they just there for a moment without wanting to have a long conversation with you? Learn to read people to avoid confusing your needs with their needs.

It is not important to talk with many people, but it is important to talk thoroughly with the ones you meet—quality rather than quantity.

The busy networker: Really hates going to receptions and conferences, and only attends to keep their employer or the host happy. Rushes to the location of the event, delivers the gift, grabs something from the buffet, and then is out of there, short and sweet. Talks politely with very few people without exchanging business cards. Stands anywhere because they nearly leave before they have arrived!

TIPS:

Be present (even if it is only for a couple of minutes). A conversation with another person can easily be memorable even if it is short. It depends on how you behave during the few minutes you spend together.

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General TIPS:

Whatever type you are, it is important that you begin to enjoy or at least appreciate situations where there are people you do not know. It can help ease your nerves if you know who will attend and if you ask your host in advance to introduce you to people you would like to meet.

You should prepare yourself before you go. You know that people will ask you about particular things; therefore, you must carefully think through in advance what you will say when people ask you about your job, future, etc.

When you attend a conference, you should think about whom you will meet and how you will interact with them. Prepare questions that you will ask others in advance. This way, you can better concentrate on enjoying the event rather than trying to come up with good questions on the spot.

Who are some of the interesting people that you can meet at the conference? At many conferences, the speakers do not hide in a VIP area but mingle with the participants and often show up for each other's presentations to ask much-too-intelligent questions. In such situations, they will find it interesting that you want to connect with them.

Spend time being social in places where you will find good contacts and get a chance to debate a topic with people who have professional backgrounds that are different from yours.

Before the conference:

- Try to find out who will attend. What are their areas of expertise?
- Get the list of presenters and participants
- Which studies will be presented at the conference?
- Will you be traveling together?
- What can you do to have as much contact as possible with the participants?
- Can you participate as a sponsor, speaker, or co-organizer?
- Can you host customer meetings, network meetings, receptions, etc.?
- Where are people staying?
- Are you staying at the same hotel as the people you would like to meet?

At the conference:

- Get a program with the overview of the speakers and workshops
- Is it possible to get "face time" with some of the speakers?
- Can you invite a VIP person (from the conference) to meet your colleagues?
- Do you have the business cards of people that you want to follow up with?

After the conference:

- Did you agree to follow up with the people you got in touch with?

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- Did you promise to look into something and get back to someone?
- Can you take the next step and ask for a meeting?

Business dinners and festivities:

When you attend business dinners or festivities as a guest or host, you should find out about the seating plan to be as well prepared as possible. Before an event, you should ask yourself the following:

- What do you know about the other participants?
- Who will you be seated next to?
- Does anybody you know have shared history with any of the guests?
- What topics might interest the individual participants?
- Where will the event take place? Is it possible to talk discretely with other guests during the event?

Networking correspondence

E-mails:

Many of us write e-mails to each other including after a conference. E-mails are still the most widely used method of contact. E-mails can be good, but they can also be unsuitable. People receive a lot of e-mails, and it can be difficult to remember all the e-mails that are receive because they all look alike. Learn how to write good e-mails that people want to read and will remember.

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Let me show you a very typical e-mail:

Dear XXX

Thank you for the meeting on [date]. At the meeting we agreed to blah blah.

I will follow-up and will get back you as soon as possible blah blah.

Kind regards,

XXX

Or

Dear XXX

I would like to inquire about a meeting on [date]. Attached is the draft agenda blah blah.

Kind regards,

XXX

Have you received similar e-mails? How did it make you feel? Did you feel like meeting the sender?

What is wrong with these e-mails are the following:

- **The introduction is rather impersonal**. The e-mail is not relevant because it does not link the sender and receiver together. They lack something that makes the reader think "I have to take care of this, and therefore, I will read the e-mail."
- **The e-mail is too short.** E-mails should be short, but not *too* short. Take the time to be personal. TIP: *Test the quality of your e-mails by adding some of your colleagues as CC so that you will get some feedback on your e-mails.*
- **No urgent action.** The e-mails do not ask the receiver to do something urgently. He gets the impression that he is only asked to keep his eyes and ears open, and that is rather noncommittal.

The same rules apply to letters. Be personal and relevant.

Letters and e-mails can be written in accordance with the PRAC method:

- P= Personal
- R= Relevant

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- A= Action
- C= Contact

Be personal (sometimes senders do not write a name in their e-mails; the letter just reads "Dear Customer"). Sometimes people just write a general e-mail or letter and send it to everybody in the network without addressing it to specific persons. That does not work. You will find that people will not get back to you when you write to a large group of people. People want to feel that you are engaging with them directly and personally. If you absolutely must send mass e-mails and letters, then you must not do what everyone else does. You have to think about the people who receive your e-mail or letter and why they should read it.

Fact box
Example of e-mail written in accordance with the PRAC method in a situation where you have not been in touch with someone for a long period of time. If you have not written to the person in a long time, then it can be difficult or awkward to resume the contact. Don't worry. There is a solution to that problem.

Dear James,

How are you?

[And then you ask about how things are at work, in the organization, with the family, etc. (depending on how close of a relationship you have).]

[Explain why James has not heard from you in such a long time. "You are among the people whom I really would like to reestablish contact with. I hope the feeling is mutual etc."]

[Then write about something that you two have or have had in common. Maybe you are former colleagues, partners, etc. Refer to something that the other party will remember fondly.]

[Say thank you for something so that the person knows that you value the relation and that he means something to you.]

[Then write what you need. Make it brief and concise. Be concrete. Ask for action. Then follow up.]

Warm regards,

Bob

Phone and text messages:

Personally, I'm a fan of the phone. When you call people or leave a message, you show presence and initiative, and the person you are calling can sense your mood, and vice versa. E-mail is efficient but try calling the person 30% of the time. You will be surprised how much it brings to a relationship.

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Leave a message if the person does not answer the phone. Make it brief, concrete, and personal. Smile while you are speaking, it will increase the probability that you will be someone people will actually call back. Your message should be less than one minute and include a request for further dialogue.

Social media:

Social media is here to stay whether you like it or not. The people that you will likely want to connect with are increasingly active on platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, and Twitter. Social media is useful for: information and knowledge sharing; file sharing; connecting on a professional and personal level; and for marketing, fostering loyalty, and cooperation between people.

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General Networking tips

- Be yourself—the best version of yourself
- Be strategic, selective, and thoughtful about who you network with (quality rather than quantity)
- Ask what and how questions to invite people to talk about what is on their mind
- Express needs clearly so that other people can understand you and help you
- Remember to say thank you when people help you so that they will want to help you again and again
- Remember to help other people if you can so that they will like you
- If you cannot help a person always offer the person an alternative
- Be someone to rely on so that people will want to share something with you
- Make your preparations before participating at events to avoid wasting your time and the company's resources
- Be good at making contact so that people feel they are in good company when they are with you

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Network Maintenance

Map your network

It is a great advantage to map your professional network so that you know who you are connected with and out how well you know them. Mapping your network takes some time at first, but once created, it is easy to update so that you always have the necessary overview.

Let's get started:

1. Your inner circle: Take a piece of paper and write the names of the people that are the most important for you to achieve your goals in life. Your inner circle will typically consist of ten to twelve people, and you have to select them carefully. If you include them in your inner circle, you are saying that these are the people with whom you should spend 60% of your networking time. You cannot include people in your inner circle that you don't know yet, but you can have a plan for who you would like to add to your inner circle in the long term. Then you have to go out and recruit them and develop the relationship so that they will one day be considered as one of the few most important people in your network. Your inner circle is constantly evolving as you develop yourself or as your goals change, which will determine who you need in the most inner part of your network.
2. Your middle circle: The network consists of the people you can call and who will know who you are when they hear your name, and who would want to call you back if you leave a message. You are not as comfortable with the people in the network as you are with the people in your inner circle. There will typically be fifty people in the network. They are important relationships, but not as important as the ones in the inner circle. In the network, you will find all the people who belong to the category "acquaintances."
3. Your outer circle: consists of a lot of people. Here you can have several hundred people. It includes all the people you meet in your everyday life and people who your connections have relationships with. Typically, you don't know much about each person; in fact, you might know only their first name. You should also map this circle because it can give you inspiration about who to recruit and eventually invite into your network or maybe even into your inner circle. You can map the big outer circle by going through all of your contact records. Look in your address books, business card holders, contact lists, old e-mails, Facebook, LinkedIn, and all other places where you keep information about contacts. Gather them all in one place so that you get an overview of your outer circle. Some people prefer to start with this activity and then later include the appropriate people in the two other circles.

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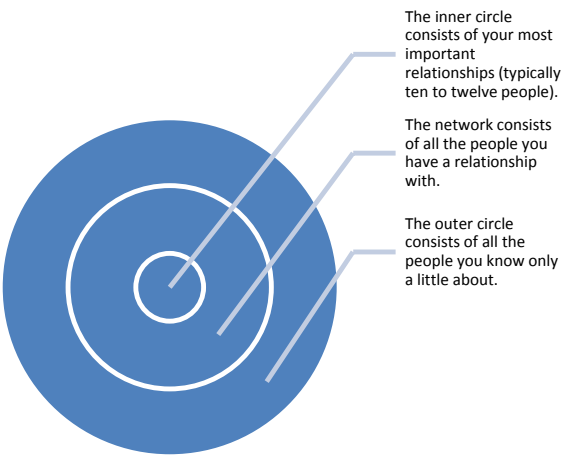
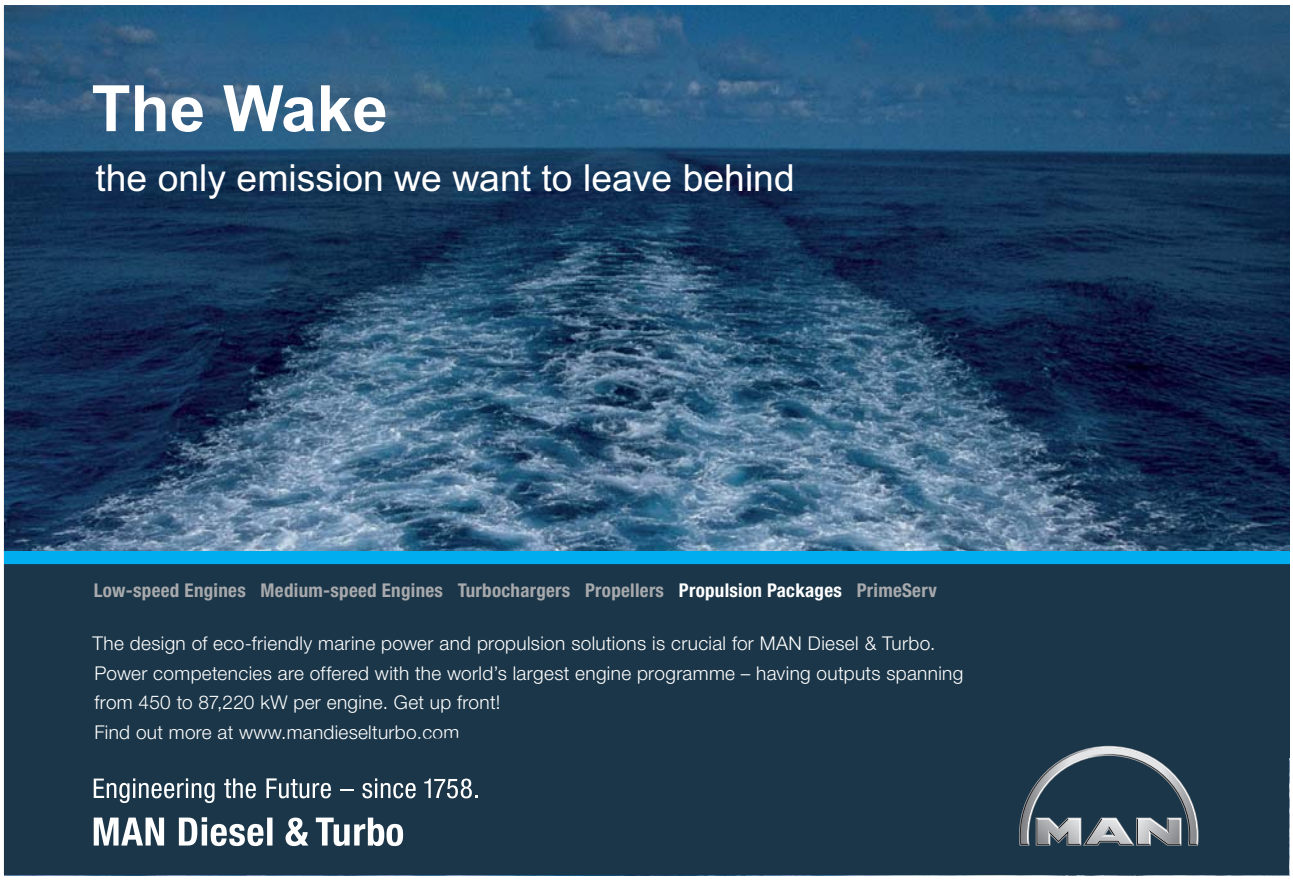

The inner circle consists of your most important relationships (typically ten to twelve people).
The network consists of all the people you have a relationship with.
The outer circle consists of all the people you know only a little about.

After you map your network, you may find that you are spending time on people you should not spend quite so much time with because they do not have a strategic function that benefits your direction. You may also find that you have nurtured potentially important relationships that require further attention.

Maintain your new relations

Networking is very much about nurturing the relationships that you already have. Nurturing relationships is often forgotten in our busy world, where everything happens so fast.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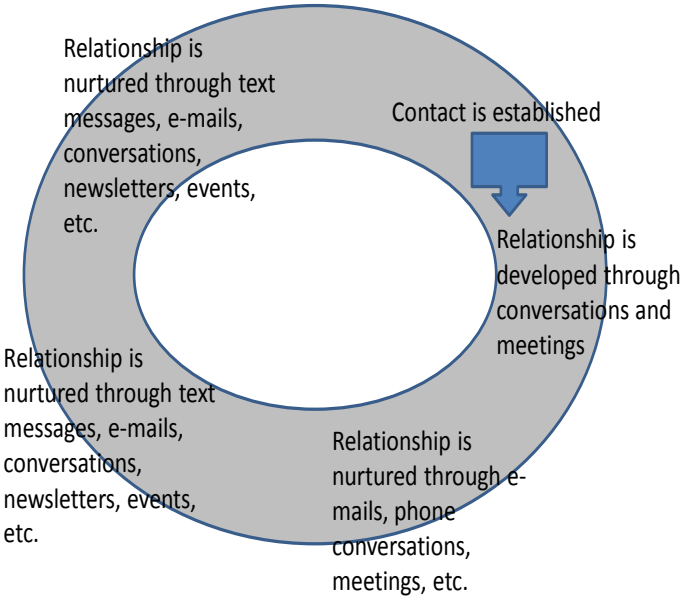
When you have a relationship with a person, it must be nurtured to further develop it. You should know how each relation would like to be "maintained." For some people, an occasional text message is enough; others prefer a dinner twice a year. The following circle shows how a year could look with regard to the maintenance of the relationships in your network.


Relationship is nurtured through text messages, e-mails, conversations, newsletters, events, etc.
Contact is established
Relationship is developed through conversations and meetings
Relationship is nurtured through text messages, e-mails, conversations, newsletters, events, etc.
Relationship is nurtured through e-mails, phone conversations, meetings, etc.

A network is like a herb garden, where you sow, water, and finally, one day harvest. By that, I mean that you must build and nurture your relationships before you can expect to reap the benefits of them. If you think it sounds time-consuming to cultivate a relationship, you're right. Therefore, I don't recommend you network with more people than you can maintain at any given time.

Many people start networking at the time when they really need something instead of continuously making connections, nurturing relationships, and giving of themselves—like it should be done. A relationship must be maintained and developed on an ongoing basis; otherwise, it loses its value. As a rule of thumb, do not let more than fourteen days go by from the time you receive a business card until you follow up on the contact with a phone call, e-mail, letter, or whatever means of contact you find best suits the situation.

All relationships have a life cycle. Some relationships last a lifetime, and others only last a few weeks. The important thing is that you keep in mind that relationships develop.

Basically, most relations go through phases such as the following:

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- You meet and exchange contact information. You follow up, meet, talk with each other, write to each other, and start doing business with each other.
- You regularly contact each other. Over time, you feel an increasing sense of togetherness and confidence.
- After a while, the relationship becomes informal because you feel comfortable in each other's company.

Whether you go through all the phases depends on your ability and desire to develop a relationship. Most of us are expert at establishing a relationship, but there is an art to transforming a connection into an informal, mutual, and meaningful relationship from which we can reap the business rewards.

The key is to take your time getting to know the other person so that you can treat each person individually in accordance with their expectations.

Communication channels

There are big differences in how people want to be contacted and kept updated about you and your company's activities.

Basically, you can just ask people what they prefer. Some people prefer the contact to be established and maintained through regular in-person meetings; others prefer combining meeting in person with virtual networking via social media. Some prefer e-mails, and others prefer text messages. Also, keep in mind that some people trust others quickly; others need more time. The key is to treat each person in your network as an individual and be patient with person's whose style differs from your own. Listen, observe, and respond appropriately.

Below is an overview of the different generations and how they typically prefer to network. The overview is, of course, a generalization and is only meant to help you choose the recognize that you should expect individuals to have their own preferences.

Method/Generation	Baby boomers	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Physical meeting	High degree	In the beginning	Low degree	Not relevant
E-mails/letters	High degree		Low degree	Not relevant
Phone/text	Not text	High degree	High degree	Text
Web 2.0 / social media	Low degree	To some extent	High degree	Very high degree

A healthy and well-groomed network is a good basis for expansion. It is said that if you do not take good care of the relationships that you have in your network, adding new contacts is difficult.

Expand your network

You might be in the situation, or you will be eventually, that you need to update your network with new contacts. Therefore, it is important to consider where you can meet the people that you need in your network.

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In order to achieve your commercial objectives, you must go out and "recruit" the people you want to include in your network. Use your existing network to find out if you know someone who knows someone who knows the person you wish to meet. If that is not successful, then find out how and where you can meet these people. Keep in mind that the relationships in your network should represent different age-groups, industries, and educational backgrounds from yourself and the existing members of your network. This will enhance your knowledge base, way of looking at solutions to problems, and the level of inspiration that you can draw on from your network.

Actively contact people through your existing network through e-mails, direct phone calls, and through Web 2.0 media. Tell people you meet that you're working on getting access to and establishing a relationship with person X.

Ask people that you know for advice on how to get in touch with the person that you want to meet. You will be surprised at how willing people are to help you.

When it comes to expanding your network, you must be creative. Do you have the chance to visit one or several people on your list via conferences or local lectures? Can you make a comment on blogs, articles, or something else they have written?

First encounters with new recruits

I shared information on the importance of first encounters with new people earlier but it bears repeating in our coverage of expanding your network.

One day, you will be face-to-face with the person that you want to add to your network. It is important to consider what you will say to them when you finally meet them.

Brain power
By 2020, wind could provide one-tenth of our planet's electricity needs. Already today, SKF's innovative know-how is crucial to running a large proportion of the world's wind turbines.
Up to 25 % of the generating costs relate to maintenance. These can be reduced dramatically thanks to our systems for on-line condition monitoring and automatic lubrication. We help make it more economical to create cleaner, cheaper energy out of thin air.
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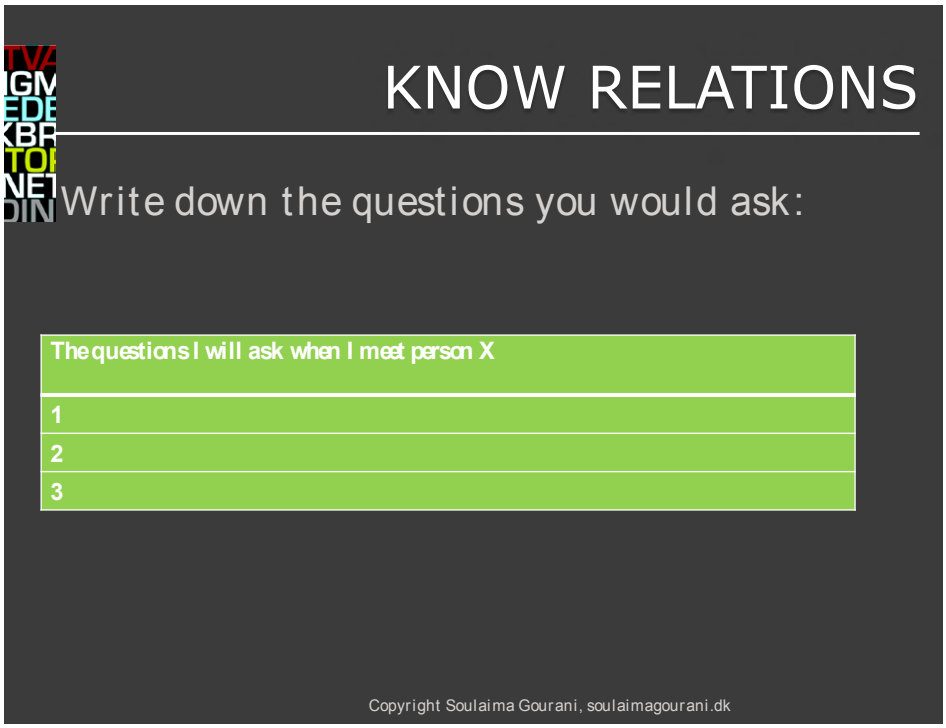
Look at it from their perspective. Consider *why* they should meet or talk with you and why they should spend their precious time on you.

I recommend that you write down the three to five questions you would ask them and be able to deliver an explanation for why they should spend their time interacting with you and trading with your company:



I recommend keeping a record of the questions that you develop.
How will you make a good impression?

- Depict yourself in a positive light
- Never talk ill of others, including competitors (even if you really want to; control your inner beast)
- Let the other person have a chance to talk
- Ask good questions

When you are a participant in a network conversation, it is important that you make sure that the other party gets to say what is essential to them and that you take advantage of the little time that you have with them.

The main purpose of most meetings is to sell something—including selling yourself. That's why almost every meeting is kind of a sales meeting. This is also the case at network meetings, but you need to keep in mind that you want to establish a long-term relationship with the person. Therefore, it is very important that you build the conversation in accordance with networking principles.

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Being a good networker means that you not only take the responsibility for your own career but also for the career and success of your new relationship.

A networking conversation is a dialogue that is an exchange of spoken language and body language between two or more people who want to establish a relationship with each other. In turn, you are the sender or recipient in the conversation. When you are networking, it can be difficult to keep a conversation going with someone you don't really know without talking too much about trivialities, but you actually need to make the most of the opportunity to get to know the person and find out whether you can help each other. The conversation should not just be an exchange of professional information and knowledge about each other; it is also about creating identity with the new person. It is about finding common ground and interests unrelated to business.

Allow for adequate talk-time

As a rule of thumb, a conversation in which both parties get enough talking time lasts between forty-five minutes and two hours. It could be possible to do it faster, in about thirty minutes, but only few people can uncover another person within that time frame; most of us need more time to do that.

- Both parties get a chance to speak.
- There is a fair exchange of asking and answering questions.
- It is your responsibility that your interlocutor understands your current and future needs that they can help you with.
- *The conversation can be defined as a genuine effort to reach a clarification or mutual understanding.*
- The conversation is confidential.

Keep the momentum going after the meeting, follow-up! If you have done a good job of discovering who the other person is you will now be in possession of valuable information about the person's everyday life. You may know what the person is thinking about, what they are considering, what their worries are, etc. Take responsibility for the development of the relation into your hands. Nurture the relationship from the point of professional and formal to one of more personal and informal.

General networking tips

My suggestion is that you make a detailed action plan covering the following:

- Create your network map? You must have a good overview of your network to be able to network professionally and purposefully?
- Expand your network? Always be aware of where can you meet new people.
- Improve how you tend to the individual relations in your network. Make sure that you have a positive and loyal relationship with each person.
- Be aware of what you need to develop in yourself in order to become the best version of you.

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Conclusion

We live in a relation-based society. Unlike in the past, where having the right connections was reserved for a few, now everybody has the opportunity to build a network of strong relationships. So your emotional quotient (EQ) is extremely important to your success. Recall that your EQ is your total ability and motivation to understand and engage in relationships. Develop and utilize your skill in this area and you will be successful.

To build your professional network, you must foster a deep personal trust in the minds of others. Trust is the glue that binds people together. Trust is a result of a series of actions and consistent behavior. This trust is critical to convincing them that you are the right horse to bet on. Life isn't fair and doesn't always reward the most industrious or smartest people. But a solid relationship based on trust will influence may influence a person to follow you through thick and thin.

Your personal power is the positive impact and your energy. Some people have it, others do not. Therefore, some people do better in the world than others. Personal power is a much sought-after quality in employees. It is the reason that people remember you, choose you for the exciting jobs, projects, sales opportunities, etc. You may not have come upon personal power naturally but you can certainly enhance the energy that you radiate.

Early in your career, you should pay particular attention to networking and network maintenance. This is the time to start developing good work habits that will advance your career. It is far easier to start out developing healthy work habits than to change unhealthy habits and routines later in life. It is also in the beginning of your career that you have the opportunity to build a strong platform from which you can draw on for the rest of your career.

Your career begins on the first day of your very first job. From the moment you step into the office, you start to build up the expectations that will help pave the way for your present and following opportunities. The more conscious you are about it, the better career opportunities you will have. Therefore, it is a good idea to be aware of what you learn and radiate from the very beginning. Having the IT factor at the start of your career will serve you very well.

Your quest to gain real influence and create something greater than yourself is the most career-enhancing tool you have! If your only purpose is to create profit and turnover or buy a big house, I argue that only a few people will want to help you. You must, in one way or another, make your cause visible, and it is ok that you earn money from pursuing your cause, but it is important that people feel that it also contributes to them having a better life, achieving more success, or obtaining new knowledge. Igniting your career using the helpful tools that you have encountered in this book will lead to life-long relationships, business success, and a fruitful career.